

To: School Superintendents
From: Peter McWalters, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education
Date: November 3, 2003

Re: School and District Report Cards

Dear Colleagues:

Today we are posting your 2003 District Report Card on our Web site – www.ridoe.net

Your school report cards were posted at this site last month. A “quick guide” that explains how to read these report cards is also posted on this site, along with instructions for how to print copies of the school and district report cards.

Please note that under federal law, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, you are required to disseminate these district and school report cards. The law requires you to “publicly disseminate” these report cards to all schools in your district and “to all parents of students attending these schools” (Sec. 1111 (h)(2)(E)). This dissemination will of course require coordination between your office and your principals.

There are many ways by which you can disseminate these report cards and the “quick guide” to parents, including direct mail or as an enclosure with other mailings from the district. The schools may distribute these district and school report cards along with individual student report cards, as well.

We encourage you and your principals to write cover letters to accompany these report cards. The cover letters can help parents understand the data and other information contained in the report cards, and the letters can be an opportunity to explain steps each school is taking to meet the state’s performance goals.

We also encourage you work with your principals to use these report cards during your School Report Nights, which are part of the annual SALT process. These School Report Nights can be an excellent opportunity to discuss the school report cards, to highlight some of the key information, and to respond to inquiries and suggestions from parents and from the school community.

Please file with my office, by December 1st, a report confirming that you have disseminated these report cards and explaining your method of doing so.

We are notifying the media today that these report cards are being posted; we are asking the media to embargo this information until Wednesday morning, though reporters may call you over the next two days to discuss the information contained within the report cards.

You may want to note that, unlike the school report cards, your district report cards do not include a performance classification for all districts. Some districts have been classified as “in need of improvement.” The other districts have received no classification.

Districts are classified as “in need of improvement” if *either* of these two conditions are met:

- A. At least 40% of the schools are making “insufficient progress,” or
- B. Schools in at least two levels (elementary, middle, high school) are making “insufficient progress”

During the course of the 2003-04 school year, we will continue to revise and expand the on-line versions of these report cards; the final version of the annual report card will be completed in the spring of 2004. You will be required to disseminate only the preliminary card, however.

We will hire a translator to prepare a Spanish-language version of the template for these report cards. This template will be posted on our Web site as soon as it is available.

If there is anything that this department can do to help you with this process, or if you have any questions regarding the report cards, you may call Elliot Krieger, in my office, at 222-4600 ext. 2182.

Sincerely,

Peter McWalters
Commissioner of elementary and secondary education